Jessica Sutherland

EDIT 5316

Case Study 1

**1. Why do you think Malcolm structured the certificates the way he did? That is, what was he trying to accomplish through his content organization structure and what learning theory(s) most likely guided his thinking?**

I think Malcolm structured the certificates the way he did because if someone wanted to specialize in one area they could just pick that one specific certificate become proficient in that area, and then go get a job. It is much better than the previous structure where the students had to go through many classes to reach the “capstone.” I think his thought process was guided by schema theory. He separated the certificates by different schemas so that they “are related in systematic and predictable ways.” (pg 39) Therefore, students’ schema of systems engineering, or the like, would continue to grow.

**2. What learning theory(s) most likely guided the design of Malcolm’s sample programming module?**

The learning theory that guided Malcolm’s sample programming module was Cognitive Load Theory. “That is, learners are gradually introduced to a series of task classes, each of which represents, on a simple to complex continuum, a version of the whole task.” (39) This way the students are learning skills from easy to complex within each set of certificates. You can tell from his module that students should already have a basic knowledge of the vocabulary and computer skills, which would have been taught in the two classes prior to the one they are currently taking.

**3. Given the factors listed below, address 1) the strengths of Malcolm’s module design with an explanation as to why you consider them strengths, and 2) what suggestions you would give Malcolm to improve the module design, again with corresponding explanations/rationales.**

* **The goals of the grant project (see Appendix 12-A)**
* **The nature of the course content**
* **The accelerated delivery format**
* **The web-based delivery medium**

When looking at the goals of the grant Malcolm made the certificate programs go right along with the goals which were: having an online certificate or degree program, and certificate programs that can add to or update a student’s current skill set. His new structure is a strength because the way the courses were laid out previously didn’t allow a student to pick one area and become proficient. The current layout allows for an update in skills and/or a certificate in a specific area that can stand on its own and be useful. Along with meeting the goals of the grant project, Malcolm also designed the certificates to lay the ground work and then build on those fundamentals to reach the final goal for each certificate. This structure is a huge strength because students do not want to spend their time taking hard classes and then move back down to something easier. It is much easier to go in sequence. He also put content in the certificates that would be viable skills in the current marketplace, which is easily recognizable in his module design. You can also see humor throughout the module which I feel would keep students engaged. The delivery format definitely seems to be accelerated. The module seems as though a student, if knowledgably about the content, could complete the material in the allotted amount of time.

One suggestion I would give Malcolm when it comes to the accelerated delivery format is to give students time to feel it out for themselves. This module has the feel of a written manual on how to do something. It doesn’t come across as, this is a new concept to be learned lets figure it out together. It also seems like there might not be enough instructions if someone gets lost. The module seems as if could help communicate instructions for a face-to-face class, not necessarily an online class. For example, the section on collaboration/discussion seems as though those questions were thought up to help guide a discussion in a large class to get everyone thinking. Although the content of the course seems sound, the delivery and functionality of the course is lacking.

**4. Discuss the differences in design when incorporating authentic learning activities, time for reflection, and collaborative activities into online instruction versus face-to-face instruction.**

Authentic learning doesn’t happen by chance, it takes planning by the teacher. When a chapter in a book is read in a face-to-face class the students can come to class and express to each other how it relates to their life or maybe how it could never relate, but those face-to-face students have the ability to express themselves and gain different perspectives from their peers. In an online class it is more difficult to incorporate authentic learning activities. As a teacher you don’t want to create something to be done just to have the students get a grade, so to plan for this in an online learning environment is just that much more challenging. For an online class you could split the class into groups and give them a topic, home state, and have them create different experiences for their group members with music uploads that represent the state and typical foods of that area. They could also incorporate videos of the best places to visit. These few ideas could be the beginning point for students to really discuss and find out more about one another, which would then also make them feel more connected to the class.

When discussing time for reflection it once again is different between a face-to-face class and an online class. The face-to-face class can be expected to have read the chapters of any text and be ready for a group discussion when class starts. An online class is different because the student is essentially learning on their own, so when they reflect, say on a discussion board, they need more time to read other people’s points of view and also be given a chance to go back to the readings to see if they missed something that someone else saw.

When trying to incorporate collaborative learning activities for online learning, in my opinion, it takes much more thought and time to produce something of quality. For example, if an early childhood class was learning about Dr. Seuss you might have a face-to-face class pick a book create a presentation and present to the class how that certain book could guide learning in a kindergarten classroom. On the other hand, if the same class was an online class then you would have to think more outside the box. The online class might try and integrate Skype in their discussion time by reading a book allowed to the group, so everyone doesn’t have to buy a copy of each book, and then sharing ideas of how they would integrate that into the classroom. Then they could also upload sample designs of projects they would have go along with their unit. With these two activities the students, from both classes, are being engaged, but also having collaborative learning that is appropriate for their class.

**5. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of repurposing existing courses, as opposed to developing new courses for online delivery.**

When a teacher is first starting their online teaching career I think they might have a tendency to try and fit their existing course into an online course. The one area I can see this as an advantage is for the basic objectives and goals of the course. You are still going to want students to read a certain book and find meaning in it, but that doesn’t mean that the structure or design will be the same. From my perspective there are many disadvantages with repurposing an existing course into an online course. First, when creating meaningful learning experiences you can’t simply tell an online course to have a group discussion. The teacher must first create an atmosphere of community togetherness so that the students will feel open to expressing their ideas. Secondly, the online class doesn’t have the benefit of having the teacher in front of them to ask as many questions as time allows, so the teacher must create, either in a discussion board or in groups, an avenue for online students’ questions and comments to be heard and have answered. Lastly, in an online class the student doesn’t have the luxury of getting all their learning styles met. Therefore, an online teacher has to create experiences where the student sitting at home, who is a visual learner, can have their needs meet as well. Overall, the two classes, though same by the course title, need to be structured differently to meet the needs of the online learner verses the face-to-face student.